BIRKBECK
University of London

Minutes of the Academic Board Executive Committee
3 June 2010

Present:
Professor David Latchman (Chair)
Professor John Annette, Mr Richard Clarke, Professor Philip Dewe, Professor Hilary Fraser,
Professor Stephen Frosh, Professor Matthew Innes, Professor Sue Jackson, Professor
Nicholas Keep, Mrs Tricia King, Dr Kate Mackenzie Davey, Professor Philip Powell,
Professor Patricia Tuit, Professor Miriam Zukas,

By invitation:
Dr Jasbir Gill (Director, IT Services), Mr Philip Payne (Librarian).

In attendance:
Mr Keith Harrison (Secretary and Clerk to the Governors), Ms Naina Patel (Director of
Human Resources), Ms Megan Reeves (Deputy Secretary), Mr Peter Westley (Director of
Finance), Mrs Katharine Bock (Deputy Clerk to the Governors), Mr Trevor Pearce (Deputy
Academic Registrar).

Apologies for absence:
Professor Mike Oaksford, Professor Costas Douzinas, Dr Rebecca Gumbrell-McCormick,
Mr Dean Pateman (Academic Registrar), Mr David McGhie (Deputy Secretary and Director
of Planning),

29 MINUTES AND REPORT TO THE ACADEMIC BOARD
Noted:
29.1 The Minutes of the last meeting of ABExCo were reported to Academic Board on
24 February 2009, having been confirmed by those members of the Committee
present at the Board’s meeting. Academic Board approved ABExCo’s
recommendations as follows:
• Approval of the Institutional Audit Briefing document submitted to the
  QAA prior to institutional audit 7-11 June.
• Division of the undergraduate College Board of Examiners into two boards:
  Arts/Law and Science/Social Sciences.
• Establishment of a Research Student Sub-Committee as proposed by
  Research Committee.
• Adoption of procedures for the consideration of research ethics, including the establishment of a **College Research Ethics Committee** reporting to Research Committee.
• Procedure for **appeals against decisions of Boards of Examiners**, subject to provision being made for Chairs of the appeal panels to exercise discretion to permit student observers to speak during appeals.
• College Policy on the **Accreditation of Prior Learning**.
• Revisions to the **Learning and Teaching Strategy**
• Establishment of the following **research centres**:
  o **A Commodity Finance Centre** in the School of Business Economics and Informatics (Economics, Mathematics & Statistics).
  o **A Centre for Law and the Humanities** in the School of Law.
• Terms of reference of proposed Strategic Review projects aiming to support and enhance **student recruitment and retention**, which would report to the Student Experience and Widening Participation Committee.

30 **MATTERS ARISING**

**Noted:**

**Senate House Library**

30.1 A new usage based charging model had been agreed by the University. The costs would be transferred to Schools via the Income Distribution Model, based on identification by Schools of students needing to use the Library. Other students could pay to use the Library. The Birkbeck Library would continue to be available to all enrolled students.

**ACTION (Librarian)** Check the policy for Senate House Library complies with regulations on charging for university library use.

**Cambridge Education Group**

30.2 The College was negotiating an agreement with Cambridge Education Group for CEG to rent office and classroom space, as well as an academic progression agreement. The agreement covered progression from the CEG programme to Birkbeck programmes at undergraduate and postgraduate level. CEG would be responsible for quality assurance within its programmes and for obtaining student visas. CEG would pay for room rental as well as a capitation fee for each student. CEG students would have use of Birkbeck’s library and IT facilities. The agreement was for three years with break clauses and would be regularly reviewed. The CEG programmes focused on study skills and settling in the UK, so there would be minimal competition with Birkbeck programmes.
31 MASTER’S REPORT
Noted:
31.1 The Master had given evidence to Lord Browne’s review of student fees and finance. The review was giving attention to part time provision.

31.2 The post-election emergency budget had confirmed a £200M cut in university funding: £118M of the additional student places in the University Modernisation Fund announcement made before the election and £82M of other savings. Birkbeck had not made a bid for University Modernisation Fund places.

31.3 Following Strategic Planning Committee’s consideration of School and professional services strategic plans, the College budget and income distribution model was being complied, in consultation with the Chair of the Finance and General Purposes Committee. The Pro Vice Master (Strategy) was working with Schools to finalise their budgets. There was a need to cut back expenditure at the outset of the year but the position would be reviewed in January in the light of actual student numbers and deferred expenditure would be reinstated if appropriate.

32 QAA INSTITUTIONAL AUDIT
Noted:
32.1 Preparations for the QAA Institutional Audit (7-11 June 2010) had been completed. The auditors had asked for two meetings with staff and two with students. The outline outcome should be communicated to the College within two weeks of the audit visit. If positive, this would lead to resumption of the College’s application for degree awarding powers.

33 TEACHING AND QUALITY ENHANCEMENT COMMITTEE
Received:
33.1 The Report of the TQEC following its meeting on 11 May 2010. (X 2009 18)

Student Retention Strategy
Noted:
33.2 The Student Retention Strategy had been approved by the Strategic Planning Committee with regard to resources and referred to TQEC for consideration of its academic aspects. The strategy focused on undergraduate degree students and in particular the period before enrolment and the first year, when students were most at risk of dropping out. TQEC had endorsed the strategy.

Recommended to Academic Board:
33.3 Endorsement of the Student Retention Strategy

University of London External Programme regulations
Recommended to Academic Board:
Approval of the Regulations for 2010-11 for the following External Programmes:
- BA Spanish and Latin American Studies
- BA Philosophy;
- Introduction to Philosophy short courses

Amendments to the Regulations for Taught Programmes

TQEC considered proposals for amendments to the Regulations for Taught Programmes, developed following consultation across the College including Executive and Assistant Deans, Chairs of Boards and sub Boards of Examiners and School Managers.

The “30%/40%” threshold for re-assessment

Following previous discussion at ABExCo and Academic Board of proposals relating to the threshold mark enabling students to enter for reassessment without repeating the year, this and other matters were considered during the annual review of the Common Award Scheme.

Responses had emphasised the importance of the exercise of discretion of Boards and sub Boards. Most respondents were in favour of removing an outright threshold mark and giving Boards discretion to decide whether candidates needed to repeat the year.

TQEC recommended the following amendment to Regulation 25.1 of the Regulations for Taught Programmes of Study:

Current Regulation
25.1 The Board of Examiners or nominated committee has the final decision on whether to allow a student to be reassessed in any element of a module.

25.2 To be eligible to be reassessed in one or all of the elements of a module a student must have achieved a minimum overall result of between 30%-39% for undergraduate and 40%-49% for postgraduates in the module.”

New Regulation
25.2 A student may be eligible for re-assessment in one or all of the elements of a module that they have not previously passed, at the discretion of the relevant Board of Examiners or nominated committee, subject to Regulations 24.3 and 24.4.

Capping of marks:

TQEC recommended no change to the regulations for capping of marks, which apply to cases of examination offences and late submission of coursework.
**Compensated fails:**

33.10 TQEC recommended the following amendment to Regulation 27 of the Regulations for Taught Programmes of Study:

Current regulation

27.1 When a student has exhausted all attempts at a module and has not passed that module, the Board of Examiners shall award a compensated fail or fail for the module. A “compensated fail”, will be awarded at the discretion of the sub-board of examiners and may only be awarded for modules where the overall result is 30-39% (undergraduate, other than the LLB), 35-39% (LLB) or 40-49% (postgraduate). A “compensated fail” may not be awarded for a core module with the exception of core modules on the LLB programme where up to 30 credits may be compensated at the discretion of the examination board.

New regulation

27.1 Where a student has achieved a result of 30-39% (undergraduate, other than the LLB), 35-39% (LLB) or 40-49% (postgraduate), the Board of Examiners may, at its discretion, offer a “compensated fail”. A “compensated fail” may not be awarded for a core module with the exception of core modules on the LLB programme where up to 30 credits may be compensated at the discretion of the examination board. Where a student has not exhausted the prescribed number of attempts at that module the student may reject the offer of a compensated fail and seek to pass the module at the next available opportunity; any offer of a compensated fail will lapse once a further assessment is attempted.

27.5 Where a student has accepted the award of a compensated fail, and progressed to the next year of academic study, they may not rescind this acceptance and attempt any further assessment at that module.

27.6 Where a student has exhausted all attempts at a module and has not passed that module, and has not been offered and accepted the offer of a “compensated fail” then the Board of Examiners will award a fail for the module.

**Minimum volume of study in any academic year**

33.11 TQEC recommended the following amendment to Regulation 8 of the Regulations for Taught Programmes of Study
Current Regulation
8.2 The minimum volume of study permitted in an academic year will normally be 30 credits.

8.3 The maximum volume of study that may normally be permitted for a part-time student in one academic year is 90 credits.

New Regulation
Removal of Regulation 8.2 on the grounds that guidance on this issue was better applied by policy than regulation.

33.12 TQEC reported that it would give further consideration to the removal of Regulation 8.3 in tandem with drafting of new policy taking into account implications for HEFCE funding in relation to part-time and full time students.

Maximum period of registration
33.13 TQEC recommended the following amendment to Regulation 5 of the Regulations for Taught Programmes of Study:

Current Regulation
5.2 The following details the maximum period which any student may be registered from the time of their first enrolment on the programme (not including any approved period of interruption):

Undergraduate Programmes
Cert HE: 2 years
Diploma HE: 5 years
Foundation degrees (FdA & FDSc): 5 years
Bachelors’ degrees (BA, BSc): 7 years
Graduate Certificate 3 years
Graduate Diploma 4 years

Postgraduate Programmes
Postgraduate Certificate: 2 years
Postgraduate Diploma (PG Dip): 5 years
Masters (MA, MSc, MFA, MRes) degrees: 5 years

In addition, students transferring onto a programme with credit will have their maximum period of registration determined on a pro-rata basis by the admissions tutor at the time of entry.

New Regulation
5.2  “Credit awarded towards an undergraduate award may normally count towards that award for a period of seven years from the date of the award of the credit. Credit awarded towards a postgraduate award may normally count towards that award for a period of five years from the date of the award of that credit. Where any credit awarded towards a degree is judged by the Board of Examiners to have lapsed then the Board of Examiners will judge the maximum period of registration to have been exceeded and registration on the programme will be terminated.”

TQEC noted that, in addition, College policies permitted the termination of registration of any student where a sub-board consider that they were making insufficient academic progress, even if they had not completed the specified number of attempts at a module or had not exceeded the maximum period of registration.

**Recommended to Academic Board**

**33.14** Approval of amendments to the Regulations for Taught Programmes of Study as recommended by TQEC and noted above.

**Learning and Teaching Strategy**

**Noted:**

**33.15** TQEC forwarded the reports of Assistant Deans (Learning and Teaching) on the implementation of the Learning and Teaching Strategy in Schools. Different approaches were being adopted in different Schools according to academic subject differences and School plans and strategies; the purpose of the strategy and reports was to enable information to be shared and common issues to be identified and discussed.

**34**  **RESEARCH COMMITTEE**

**Received:**

**34.1** The Report of the Research Committee following its meeting on 13 May 2010 (X 2009 19)

**College Research School review**

**34.2** Research Committee recommended approval of the Report of the College Research School review group. This included a proposed change of title to **Birkbeck Graduate Research School** and the establishment of its formal reporting line to the newly established Research Student Sub-Committee of the Research Committee.

**34.3** Professor Li Wei had been appointed as Director of the Birkbeck Graduate Research School, seconded part time from the School of Social Sciences, History and Philosophy.
**Recommended to Academic Board:**

34.3 Approval of the establishment of the Birkbeck Graduate Research School as recommended by Research Committee.

**Research Ethics**

34.5 Research Committee recommended amendments to the College Research Ethics policy to take into account new ESRC requirements. ABExCo also discussed the inclusion in the policy of reference to the Genetic Modification and Radiation Protection Committees of the College Safety Committee. The point was made that the College Research Ethics policy applied to work involving human subjects and that the Genetic Modification and Radiation Protection committees work was related to safety rather than ethical issues because UK legislation already banned work involving human subjects. It was agreed that the policy would be reworded to provide for any School or College Committee to refer ethical issues to the College Research Ethics Committee, including work at Birkbeck and work in collaboration with or at other UK or overseas institutions, rather than name specific committees or activities.

**Recommended to Academic Board:**

34.6 Approval of amendments to the College Research Ethics policy, subject to subject to revision as noted above.

**Research papers repository**

**Recommended to Academic Board:**

34.7 Approval of a mandate that all research papers should be deposited in the College’s Institutional Repository from 2011-12.

**Research Centres**

**Recommended to Academic Board:**

34.8 Note of closure of the South East Regional Research Laboratory.

**Research Strategy**

34.9 Research Committee considered a report from the College Research Strategy Working Group which was developing draft strategy to be presented in the autumn term.

**REF 2013**

34.10 Research Committee considered a report from the REF Working Group on ongoing external reviews of the proposed European Languages & Cultures; Geography; Law; Library, Information, Communication, Cultural & Media Studies; Social Policy & Social Work; and Sociology submissions. It was likely that the REF would be delayed by at least one year.
35 STUDENT EXPERIENCE AND WIDENING PARTICIPATION COMMITTEE

Received:

35.1 The Report of the SEWP following its meeting on 12 May 2010. (X 2009 20)

Noted:

35.2 SEWP had considered and endorsed the Student Retention Strategy from the point of view of the student experience. It had noted award of £50K JISC funding to develop online aspects of the strategy and the initiation of a “transition to HE” student support project and summer school starting on 14 June.

35.2 SEWP recommended that Academic Board and Governors approve the Widening Participation Strategic Assessment, including specific Widening Participation targets and milestones, to be forwarded to HEFCE as a condition for continuing to receive widening participation funding. ABExCo endorsed the document and commended the Outreach and Widening Participation team for their valuable work.

Recommended to Academic Board:

35.4 Approval of the Widening Participation Strategic Assessment and forwarding of the document to Governors for their approval

36 MEDIA SERVICES REVIEW

Noted:

36.1 Recommendations arising from the initial report of the Review of Media Services (X 2009 21)

36.2 ABExCo welcomed the conclusions coming from the review so far. A Media Services Unit was proposed, bringing together audio-visual and photographic services and providing generic support. The review had also considered the need for effective links between the central unit and specialist support needed in and provided by Schools, including for “legacy” media.

36.3 Options for improving technology and support would be costed. Recommendations that could be implemented immediately included improved support and usability of teaching room technology including login to computers, instructions for equipment and accessibility of technical support.

36.4 ABExCo asked for these recommendations to be implemented for the beginning of the autumn term 2010.

37 TERMS OF REFERENCE OF ABEXCO

Considered:

37.1 A note on the ABExCo’s Terms of Reference. (X 2009 22)
37.2 ABExCo considered its Terms of Reference after its first year of operation in the new College structure, noting that its work interfaced with other Committees and parts of the College in three ways:

- With Schools on academic development, via the College and School Teaching and Quality Enhancement and Research Committees
- With Strategic Planning Committee on academic issues arising from strategy development
- With the Academic Board, as the Board’s steering and management committee.
- With Academic Board, acting as a steering group and managing its business.

38 DATES OF MEETINGS NEXT SESSION

Noted:

38.1 Dates of meetings of ABExCo in 2010-11:
- Monday 25 October 2010 at 2pm
- Wednesday 9 February 2011 at 2pm
- Tuesday 31 May 2011 at 2pm